30th July 1962]

Burning of Hindi edition of the Gazette

* 111 S.N. *Q.*—Dr. A. SREENIVASAN : Will the Hon. the Chief Minister be pleased to state—

(*a*) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the burning of Hindi edition of the Gazette of the Union Government by a political party; and

(*b*) if so, the action taken or proposed to be taken in this regard?

The Hon. Sri R. VENKATARAMAN (on behalf of the Hon. the Chief Minister) : (*a*) Yes, Sir.

(*b*) The demonstration did not evoke any public response and Government considered it best to ignore it.

Dr. A. SREENIVASAN : Is it not a fact, Sir, that under the existing law, it is an offence for a private party to print the Government Gazette, and, if so what action did the Government take in the matter against the leader of the party for having printed a Hindi version of the Gazette for the purpose of burning it?

The Hon. Sri R. VENKATARAMAN : Sir, there is also a principle of law that trivial things are not punished. Government think that it is a very trivial matter.

Dr. A. SREENIVASAN : Sir, will this not give rise to other people committing the same offence if the Government were to ignore such offences, and is it not also a fact, Sir, that this person indulged in this act for the sake of creating a political stunt?

The Hon. Sri R. VENKATARAMAN : Sir, if this becomes a contagion and more people engage themselves in such activities, Government will take serious notice of it.

Dr. A. SREENIVASAN : Can they quote this as a precedent?

The Hon. Sri R. VENKATARAMAN : Sir, the hon. Member should know that merely because some concession was shown or notice was not taken of a small incident, it cannot be pleaded as an excuse for committing the offence of a serious kind.

Motor vehicles tax

* 112 *Q.*—Sri S. K. SAMBANDHAN : Will the Hon. the Chief Minister be pleased to state—

(*a*) the amount of share given to each municipality annually from the proceeds of the motor vehicles tax; and

(*b*) when the percentage was fixed?

The Hon. Sri R. VENKATARAMAN (on behalf of the Hon. the Chief Minister) : (*a*) & (*b*) It is not a question of share but of compensation to the municipalities which were levying tolls or fees on licences granted to motor vehicles. A sum equivalent to the

average annual income derived by the municipality during the three years prior to the abolition of tolls or fees on licences is being paid annually in accordance with the provisions in section 10 of the Madras Motor Vehicles Taxation Act, 1931, as amended by the Madras Traffic Control Act, 1938.

3-10 p.m. SRI S. K. SAMBANDHAN : Sir, the toll fees were collected a number of years before, and the same compensation is being paid to each municipality. That is too low. When the Government are raising more taxes and also are increasing the tax on motor vehicles, is it not fair on their part to give the municipalities a greater share in the taxes?

THE HON. SRI R. VENKATARAMAN : The municipalities and local authorities are getting plenty of assistance from the Government. No particular revenue need be earmarked for the purpose. Whenever the Government find that some money and other assistance are to be given to the municipalities and local bodies, they will make them available irrespective of the fact whether they come from out of the compensation for loss of toll income or the motor vehicles tax.

Newspapers

*113 Q.—SRI S. K. SAMBANDHAN (on behalf of Sri M. Subbiah Chettiar) : Will the Hon. the Chief Minister be pleased to state—

(a) whether police are empowered to interrogate correspondents as to the source of news despatched for publication in newspapers; and

(b) whether it is a fact that recently a press correspondent of a Tamil Daily was interrogated by a police officer in Tiruchirappalli as regards the publication of a news relating to the resignation of the President of the District Committee of a political party?

THE HON. SRI R. VENKATARAMAN (on behalf of the Hon. the Chief Minister) : (a) Under section 161, Criminal Procedure Code, a Police Officer, while investigating a case, may interrogate any person including a newspaper correspondent supposed to be acquainted with the facts and circumstances of the case under investigation, about the said facts and circumstances which may include the source of a news despatched for publication in newspapers.

(b) The information is not correct.

DR. A. SREENIVASAN : Sir, can the police take action in such matters *suo motu* without any written complaint from any party or instructions from the Government?

THE HON. SRI R. VENKATARAMAN : Yes. It depends on the nature of the offence. If is is a cognizable offence, they will do it.